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ABSTRACT

The final report of a program offering community-based mentorships for secondary level gifted and talented students contains information on 11 model projects located in the West, Midwest, and Northeast. Offered is a rationale for the use of mentors to provide instruction and role models for gifted students. Criteria for selection of the model projects and students are explained. Summary descriptions are given of the following model programs: Project LEARN (Connecticut), The Creative Arts Community (Connecticut), The Law Institute (New York), Executive High School Internships (Massachusetts and Connecticut), Heritage of Art (Minnesota), Visions of the City (Minnesota), The Community Involvement Project (Minnesota), Program for the Academically Talented (California), Del Mar School Community Mentor Project (California), Apprenticeships in Career Exploration (California), and The Switching Yard (California). Described are dissemination activities including workshops held in each of the three regions, publication of a newsletter, and visitation of the projects. Evaluation information (primarily based on observational and anecdotal materials) for each of the projects is summarized. Appended are a discussion of youth participation, statistics on numbers of students and teachers directly affected by the mentorship program, and sample anecdotal material. (DB)

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Final Report

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COMMUNITY-BASED MENTORSHIPS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED

I. Introduction and Overview

The program reported here grew out of the conviction[1] that fundamental to the development of special gifts and talents among young people is the provision of opportunities to explore, to reach beyond the confines of the classroom, to test their capacities and to deepen an understanding of self and others.

For ten years, the National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY) has been working with school systems and other agencies to provide such learning opportunities for young people. NCRY uses the term Youth Participation to designate those programs which give youth responsible roles in real life problem-solving enterprise which respond to real needs of others and simultaneously provide opportunity for reflective evaluation of youths' experiences. Youth in these programs learn by doing, participating, acting.

NCRY was established specifically to promote Youth Participation both as an idea and in the form of real programs which serve as models to be emulated by schools, agencies, and other groups interested in expanding such opportunities for young people. This has been accomplished in several ways. A major strategy has been to locate exemplary projects of local origin and, through combined observation and consultation, to generate written information, films and workshop presentations about these projects which aid in their replication elsewhere. Another strategy has been to sponsor local demonstrations of

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1. This conviction is supported not only by the observations of NCRY, but by research reported by such groups as the National Task Force on High School Reform, the National Panel on High Schools Adolescent Education, the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, the President's Science Advisory Committee, the Phi Delta Kappa Task Force on Compulsory Education.

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project models such as Youth Tutoring [illegible] (YTY) and the Day Care Youth Helper Program, both considered promising operational models readily adaptable in a variety of communities on a nationwide scale.

NCRY views the Community-Based Mentorships for Gifted and Talented Students as one kind of model for Youth Participation. In this model, gifted and talented youth are placed with community mentors whose skills, occupations or avocations respond to the needs and interests of the learners and who are comfortable sharing a part of their work with young people. The ideal mentor is one who is (1) interested in the student as a learner and individual and in the mutual pursuit of an activity, skills or learning; (2) usually older than the student and has a special interest or activity which engages the learner's interest; (3) able to guide a young person to experiences which are both challenging and rewarding; (4) flexible; (5) a role model, often imparting an understanding of lifestyles and attitudes different from those a student might ordinarily meet.

Under this contract, NCRY, using methods similar to those proven successful in the diffusion of models of YTY and Youth Day Care Helper Program, has sought to promote this mentorship model. NCRY thus chose to work with 11 ongoing exemplary programs located throughout the country (although the proposal provided for work with only five projects). These 11 were utilized as models for others. This strategy was deliberate, for NCRY's experience has shown the wisdom of working with a number of programs which vary on the same theme rather than with one single, isolated project; this provides a "cafeteria" of possibilities for prospective projects which must adapt to differing local constraints and practicalities.

Model projects were selected from three regions of the country, the West, Midwest, and Northeast. They represent a variety of geographic regions--big cities, suburban and rural areas--as well as varied populations including both the poor and the affluent. They were selected to demonstrate an exciting range of possible mentorship projects. They included programs in both voluntary and secondary schools. They also include:

·a law institute in an experimental high school which offers internships with judges and lawyers;

·a nature center outside a school system offering a fully accredited program with volunteer mentors from a variety of professions;

·a nonprofit job counseling agency which has developed a program for gifted students who are assigned mentorships in business, industry, the arts, education, and civic affairs; and

·the youth division of a volunteer bureau which has contracts with schools and school systems to provide work experiences as supplements or alternatives to the usual curriculum.

These models included approximately 750 students who served under mentors. In addition, NCRY estimates that about 2,600 students were involved in "spin off" projects in the three regions.

II. Rationale for Providing Community-Based Mentorships for the Gifted and Talented

It has been the experience of NCRY that Youth Participation through community-based mentorships provides a valuable contribution to the education of all young people. Through this contract, NCRY has demonstrated that the program model is easily adapted to and particularly significant for the education of the gifted and talented. This educational strategy encourages gifted and talented youngsters not only to develop their abilities but to develop them in the direction of service to others. Work under this contract has affirmed NCRY's original expectations of the value of such mentorships for the gifted and talented.

The following observations concerning education of the gifted and talented emerged from this past year's experiences.

- Gifted youngsters need the freedom to explore in depth subject matter in which they have a strong interest and which can lead to career possibilities. Such exploration is rarely possible in isolated classrooms; even independent study programs usually fail to provide needed opportunities because one single classroom teacher can seldom offer the stimulation and unique role model which each of his/her students may need. There are, however, many intelligent and creative adults in communities across the nation with resources not previously tapped by schools. These adults are available as mentors to work with individual students. The young people in NCRY mentorship projects have been apprentices, for example, to a meteorologist, a judge, a novelist, a symphony orchestra conductor, a president of a local industry, curators of an art museum, actors at a repertory theater, graduate students in science at a state university, and many others. Gifted and talented students thus had the opportunity to relate as individuals with appropriate adult role models.

- Gifted students often lack the ability to sense where their interests and talents can lead them. They need an adult model, someone interested in them as individuals who can guide them in pursuing unique interests by providing experiences that challenge, test, and reward. Mentorships offer this possibility. The young man apprenticed to the conductor of the symphony orchestra, for example, came to understand, at an early age, the personal qualities needed for this kind of career.

·Many efforts by teachers to put gifted and talented youngsters "above the crowd," whatever many benefits in terms of gaining deeper knowledge of a subject, can run the risk of aborting development of human qualities such as compassion and empathy, qualities which must be nurtured and developed throughout education if gifted and talented youngsters are to become as adults the valued resources so necessary to our society. Mentorships are thus particularly important to the full development of the gifted and talented student in the sense that the mentor can be a role model not only of competence and exploration but of compassion and caring. Almost inevitably, mentors are people whose personalities have developed to a state of "generativity"--a concern for successive generations, the conditions that make persons moral, and quality of life of those who follow. Such people are everywhere, in all occupations and endeavors, but many are not in contact with youth; whether by design or default, many have been screened out of the standard educational system by their competence and investment in productive enterprise. Mentorship programs open new opportunities for youth to interact with caring concerned adults.

Many students commented on this aspect of their experiences during the past year. One noted, for example, that the mentorship helped her gain "more responsibility, social awareness, self-esteem, maturity--knowledge unobtainable in a school building."

·Some gifted youngsters are afraid that exposure of their talents will lead to rejection by peers. Thus they "hide their lamp under a bushel" and are often frustrated and lonely. The mentorship program provides an opportunity to affirm their talents. By the end of the grant year, NCRY observed, for instance, some gifted students in the program had become mentors to other students and, following the model of their own mentors, gained recognition and approval from peers.

·The talents of youngsters who are different from the dominant school population may go unrecognized and underdeveloped; many schools lack the resources to accommocate "differences." The addition of mentorship to their education provides some of these "unrecognized" youngsters with significant role models and a chance for real work; students own efforts have a better chance for recognition than normally afforded by classroom or peers.

III. Criteria for Selection of Projects and Students

NCRY selected its models from among two kinds of existing programs. In some cases, NCRY chose to work with existing programs serving the gifted and talented to which, through NCRY assistance, a mentorship component was added. In other cases, outstanding mentorship programs were identified, and components were shaped to focus specifically on gifted and talented youngsters.

In all cases, projects selected as models for this program satisfied two sets of criteria: (a) they met NCRY's standards of excellence for programs of Youth Participation, (b) they served gifted and talented students, identified as such by criteria satisfactory to USOE's Office of the Education of the Gifted and Talented. Each set of criteria are discussed below.

a. NCRY Standards for Quality Programs of Youth Participation

NCRY defines programs of Youth Participation as those which involve youth in responsible challenging action, which meets genuine needs, with opportunity for planning and/or decision making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others--i.e. outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other important aspects are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity, opportunity for group effort toward a common goal, and establishment of a working relationship with adults in a colleagial capacity. A critical discussion of these components is included in Appendix A.

b. Criteria for Identifying Gifted and Talented Students

The contract for this project required that each participant satisfy at least two criteria of actual or potential "giftedness." Measurement of this quality is complex, especially since NCRY anticipated working with

some youth whose potential might not be overtly obvious prior to program participation. In determining what criteria to use, NCRY therefore relied heavily on the advice of its National Advisory Committee, which included NCRY Board members, scholars, teachers and program directors. The members of the National Advisory Committee were:

- Dr. Ralph W. Tyler, Director Emeritus, Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences.
- Jane Beasley Raph, Educational Consultant, former Chief, Early Childhood Division, Rutgers University.
- Francis Keppel, Director, Program on Education, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.
- Harry Passow, Jacob S. Schiff Professor of Education, Director, Division of Education, Institutions and Programs, Teachers College Columbia University.

USOE literature and the Congressional Report on the Gifted and Talented suggested use of criteria which could include but were not limited to the following:

> ...teacher nomination; peer nomination; intelligence and achievement tests; measures of creativity; selection by a panel of experts in specialty areas; or other predictive measures involving general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, talent in visual and performing arts, superior psychomotor ability.

The importance of documented accountability, in terms of these criteria, was appreciated by NCRY. At the same time, NCRY was concerned that use of traditional culture and measurement-bound criteria would exclude a number of promising youth, particularly those from minorities, whose talents would go undetected and therefore undeveloped.

It was clear from review of recent literature that many authorities, attempting to identify the gifted, were moving away from exclusive reliance on I.Q. scores, grade points and other standard measurements of academic achievement. Some had claimed that creativity, leadership ability, and talents in the performing or visual arts bore little relationship to scores on known instruments. Others, concerned with the definition and measurement of creativity, discovered differences between populations of students manifesting "high intelligence" and those labelled "creative." Further, an increasing number of scholars was suggesting that, instead of or in addition to examining tests which emphasize cognition, a broad range of seemingly disparate behaviors be considered.[2]

Thus, on the one hand, it was important to identify students in ways which would satisfy LSOE's need for accountability. At the same time, NCRY wanted to reach those unidentified gifted youth whose talents would find expression only by means of exposure to new kinds of learning opportunities--whose display of giftedness would emerge subsequent, rather than prior, to program participation. Past experience with programs of Youth Participation had demonstrated that this was possible.

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[2]For example, the Renauli/Hartman Scale of Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students includes a variety of behaviors judged to be significant indicators. Particularly important to NCRY is that teachers are alerted to the youth who display creative potential in that he or she is "nonconforming, accepts disorder; is not interested in details; does not fear being different" (i.e. "is unhibited in expression of opinion; is sometimes radical and spirited in disagreement; is tenacious"); as well as the youth with leadership potential who "likes to organize and bring structure to things, people and situations." The scale includes such diverse behaviors and qualities as "interest...at games," "athletic ability," "motor development," "sensitivity to beauty," "the ability to verbalize and make generalizations, store and recall information," or the ability to "see humor in situations which may not appear to be humorous to others."

Operating on this premise, NCRY faced a complicated research problem in that issues of identification and of evaluation were entwined. It was the strong recommendation of the National Advisory Committee that, during the first year of the program, NCRY gather anecdotal material to support the development of new kinds of identification criteria, but that NCRY should not initially undertake sophisticated and expensive research in this area.

Thus the criteria accepted by school systems funded under USOE or state education grants for the gifted and talented were adopted, with the addition of the criterion of "self-selection," resulting from strong interest in the program.[3] Students who expressed strong interest were accepted if they met one of the additional criteria suggested by USOE. Usually the accompanying criterion was that of teacher interview and selection. At the same time, evaluative material was collected (see Appendix B which was intended to serve as a data base to inform the development of additional criteria for identification).

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[3]The importance of strong interest was emphasized by NCRY Associate Dr. Jane Raph of the National Advisory Committee and co-author of Bright Underachievers: Studies of Scholastic Underachievers in Intellectually Superior High School Students. Raph, J., Passow, H. & Goldbert, N. Teacher College Press, Columbia University, New York, 1966.

IV. Selection and Development of Model Projects

Primary activities during the first half-year of the contract resulted in the development of 11 high quality mentorship programs that involved the gifted and talented. The original proposal had anticipated that additional models might be included in the program; a minimum of six models was promised. NCRY almost doubled the number of model projects originally proposed.

However, only one of the projects which had first been considered a "pillar" by the NCRY proposal at the time the proposal was written (March-April 1976) survived the interim between grant development and grant initiation. Vicissitudes ranged from the renowned hazards of being an innovative project for a special population in a time when all frills were being trimmed by budget cutters to personnel changes in some projects. In many locations, these were hard times even for the best intervention and innovation strategies. Fortunately, NCRY was able to adapt its formal plans to the practical realities of field sites without sacrificing standards of excellence.

One of NCRY's unique strengths lies in its ability to substitute quality projects when necessary, as in the case of this program, for those projects which failed to meet the criteria set out in the proposal for Community-Based Mentorships for the Gifted and Talented. This capability is possible because of the Commission's knowledge, through its clearinghouse operation of over 1000 Youth Participation projects, and its network of Associates around the country who can ascertain, on a moment's notice, the present status of projects in their geographical areas.

Two methods were used to identify model programs.

First, information in NCRY research files was reviewed; these files contain data on more than 1000 Youth Participation projects which demonstrate the

resourcefulness of young people and their ability to make decisions, take responsibility and make important contributions to their communities. Some of these 1000 Youth Participation projects are community-based mentor programs not specifically intended for the gifted but, nevertheless, very appropriate models. NCRY staff were able to persuade personnel in some of these projects to make special provision to accommodate the gifted.

Second, a network of consultants throughout the country conducted local surveys to identify and select model projects. Such consultants are designated "Associates" by NCRY since they are an integral part of NCRY's ongoing program operation. All have received special training from NCRY in strategies for identifying and stimulating authentic projects of Youth Participation. Associates, located throughout the country, come from a variety of professional backgrounds and possess a wide range of skills. They have worked with NCRY over a period of years on other federal contracts, such as those for Youth Tutoring Youth and the Day Care Youth Helper Program. Many Associates have run their own Youth Participation projects and came to the attention of NCRY as it studied exemplary projects throughout the country. Some Associates are well-known school administrators. Some are university professors who have made significant contributions as theorists. Some have skills in evaluation, writing, training and filmmaking. Thus they afford NCRY a variety of personal contracts within the field of education. As a result of their surveys, Associates were able to recommend some mentorship projects which could be adapted to the program model for this project.

In the early stages of this contract, Associates spend a great deal of time seeking out and reporting on community-based mentorship projects in their respective regions. They had extensive contact with state administrators and with other educators.

This resulted in two unanticipated and quite positive outcomes. First, through the personal contact of Associates, many educators, were alerted to the value of community-based mentorships for gifted and talented prior to the exposure NCRY would later provide through written materials and workshop presentations. Many of these educators subsequently attended workshops to learn how to implement their own mentorship programs. Second, in the course of searching for suitable models, Associates were able to offer advice to a number of programs in addition to those eventually selected as models and thus spread the concept of mentorship for the gifted and talented. Further, through this research, NCRY was able to encourage an exchange of information and visitation among projects.

Forming regional clusters. Having identified a number of promising models, the final decision on selection of program models depended on two criteria: (1) proximity to an NCRY Associate who would be able to provide technical assistance, given the reality of limited travel funds; and (2) proximity to "potential adaptors" who would be able to visit selected models at minimal travel costs.

V. Operating the Program

Three regional "clusters" were formed involving four projects each. The clusters were in the Northeast, the Midwest and the West. Summary project descriptions appear on page 14 and more complete descriptions are included in the Inservice Training Manual for Developing Community-Based Mentorships for the Gifted and Talented attached to this report (Appendix C).

Technical assistance to upgrade model project sites. Four experienced Associates, each already living in one of the above mentioned regions, were selected to provide technical assistance to upgrade the model sites.[4] Each had long experience working with or in a public school system; each also had developed contacts with administrators in state education departments and with personnel in schools of education and universities. Thus each had access to and were familiar with school programs; each also had influence with educators that enabled them to stimulate successful interventions.

As soon as the model projects were selected, Associates began regular visits to the sites and thus had frequent contact with project directors. They assisted the staff of outstanding mentorship programs in identifying gifted and talented students and in designing ways to meet their specific needs; they also assisted in developing mentorship components for programs for the gifted which had not previously included such. Associates also advised staffs of the 11 promising programs already selected how they might continue to improve,

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[4] NCRY Associates who served in this effort were Joan Schine in the Northeast; Don Conrad and Diane Hedin served in the Midwest; Penny Wright served in the West.

to further the NCRY criteria of excellence listed on page 6 above. In one case[5] the efforts of the regional Associate were credited by the program director with the actual survival of the model project during a time of extreme budget cutbacks.

Summary Descriptions of Model Sites

Northeast Region

·Project LEARN, Nature Center for Environmental Activities, Westport, Connecticut.

Project LEARN is an educational alternative offered to students in grades 6 through 12 in the Westport Public School System. It is operated by the Westport School System in cooperation with the Nature Center for Environmental Activities, a nonprofit organization in Westport. Adults, most professionally trained, from the local community volunteered to be mentors to students.

While the unifying theme of the program is nature or environmental studies and ecology, students have been able to participate in mentorships covering a broad range of topics--wildlife management, photography, early childhood through participation in the Center's nursery school.

·The Creative Arts Community, Hartford, Connecticut.

Creative Arts Community is a regional program in the greater Hartford area designed to meet the special needs of artistically talented students in the visual, dramatic and literary arts, dance, music and selected crafts. Gifted and talented youngsters in grades 7 through 12 who have shown talent in the arts qualify for the program and are matched with individual artists and arts organizations in the Greater Hartford area. Nominations may come from the general public, artists, school staff and peers. Administered by the Capitol Region Education Council, a regional service center, its full-time staff includes a director and two guidance counselors. Applicants are screened by a "planning and placement team" and by Creative Arts Community staff under general guidelines established by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

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[5]Emeryville, California. See page 17 for the program description.

The program's flexibility meets the needs of diversified talents and backgrounds. One student, for example, was apprenticed to the conductor of the Hartford Symphony. Other innercity students, working with two Hispanic musicians, developed an ethnic music group which performed for community events such as Puerto Rican festivals and neighborhood block parties. Still other students worked with a variety of artists in weaving, commercial art and fashion design, portraiture, and other visual arts. Students participate in the program for at least a year and sometimes longer. They can spend time with their mentors five afternoons a week for at least two hours.

·The Law Institute, John Dewey High School, Brooklyn, New York.

The John Dewey High School is a public experimental high school in Brooklyn. Its flexible curriculum is designed to provide opportunities for students to participate in unusual learning experiences in and beyond the school. A school year divided into five 7-week cycles allows for great diversity in teaching methods and class structure. A typical operation is the "4-1" program which allows students to spend four days a week in school and one working in a community internship. Many courses are based around student interests and requests, and the Law Institute is one example. A five-course program culminates in an internship including field work and legal research. Local judges, lawyers and others such as police and probation offices in law-related occupations are mentors and consultants to the Institute. Students share their experiences by participating in seminar groups at the high school and by contributing to the Law Institute's publication, the Cross Examiner, distributed in the school.

·Executive High School Internships, Boston, Massachusetts and Stamford, Connecticut.

Executive High School Internships is a well-known national program which has enrolled over 8,000 students in 27 cities. The Boston and Stamford programs have particularly strong mentorship components and therefore were selected as models. Students in this program spend one semester working as interns with mentors who are executives in industry, communications, media, government, social service agencies, hospitals and other fields. Students spend four days a week with the mentor and one day in a program seminar on management. The program seeks high school juniors and seniors who have demonstrated maturity, initiative and independence, as well as ability to maintain full-time academic subjects through independent study. They must have a willingness to assume responsibility and have an appetite for dealing with risk and uncertainty. These two particular programs have made a special effort to attract minority students.

Midwest Region

·Heritage of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This advanced history program is offered to gifted students in the Minneapolis Public Schools by the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Heritage of Art is part of the Humanities-on-Location program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. During the first trimester of the program, students attend an advanced art history course taught by staff of the Art Institute. The second trimester provides a mentorship experience. Working with artists and staff of the Institute, this year students prepared an exhibition entitled "Imagination: Dreams, Fantasies, Nightmares," which included art not publicly displayed before

·Visions of the City, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Visions of the City, like Heritage of Art, was also part of the Humanities-on-Location program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Students from one high school in a "black neighborhood" and from one high school in a "white neighborhood" attended a three-hour course every day for 12 weeks and received course credit. They investigated the city as a center for culture, business and industry, and as a place where people of different backgrounds meet and interact. Issues concerning community, future forecasting, urban beautification, urban ecology, and progress emerged from their study. Students photographed and recorded both the joyful and depressing sights and sounds of the city. They visited different parts of the city to inventory its components and to talk with people living or working there. At the suggestion of NCRY, a mentorship component was added through which students selected internships in human services, cultural activities and business.

·The Community Involvement Project, Southwest High School, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This program gives gifted seniors the opportunity to pursue special interests at an advanced level. Students choose mentorships in a variety of professional, occupational, artistic and service areas; mentorships have involved such experiences as conducting research in the Veterans Administration Hospital, acting in the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, working in Ralph Nader's Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, and researching General Mills Research Lab. When NCRY became involved in the project, a greater number of mentorships in human services was created.

West Region

·Program for the Academically Talented (PAT), Emeryville School System, Emeryville, California.

Emeryville School District is located in a low-income, racially mixed neighborhood where there are a number of talented students who do not aspire to education beyond the junior college level. PAT was started by a teacher in the Emeryville System for children in grades 3-8 who were identified as gifted according to California State requirements for the funding of special programs for the gifted and talented.

·Del Mar School Community Mentor Project, Tiburon, California.

An imaginative mentorship program for gifted children has been established here by a teacher who coordinates programs for mentally gifted children. The project grew out of a series of ongoing mini-courses arranged especially for gifted students and taught by persons in the community. Exciting mentorships focus, for example, on architecture, aviation, journalism, natural history, and conservation. Arrangements between mentors and students are personal and informal; they meet after school and on weekends. No academic credit is given for the experience. The coordinator maintains contact with students during lunch hours and she keeps in touch with mentors by telephone. Informality and lack of credit seem not to be a hindrance to the success of this program. In fact, the program attracted educators who had heretofore seen no possibility of "squeezing in" mentorship programs for the gifted and talented.

·Apprenticeships in Career Exploration (ACE), Project Enterprise, San Francisco, California.

Project Enterprise is a nonprofit agency which provides job counseling and referrals for youth. Cooperating with the Junior League of San Francisco, it offers special Apprenticeships in Career Exploration which provide mentorships for the gifted and talented. School teachers and counselors screen and select gifted students who are then placed by Enterprise volunteer staff in mentorships in business, industry, the arts, education and civic affairs. ACE is designed to help juniors and seniors in public, private and parochial high schools explore career possibilities. In addition to their on-site mentorships, students meet in groups of five or six with a volunteer group leader, keep a weekly journal and write a summary report evaluating their experience. Students may earn credit by enrolling for independent study or for courses related to their apprenticeships.

·The Switching Yard, Volunteer Bureau of Marin County, Inc., San Anselmo, California.

The Switching Yard is the Youth Division of the Marin County Volunteer Bureau. It has contracts with 14 cooperating Marin County high schools to provide credit-carrying work experiences as supplements or alternatives to the school curriculum. About 500 young people a year work in some form of community service and about 100 work on special projects. A special program of mentorships was established where students work under mentors, which included city councilmen, doctors and directors of social service agencies. Selection is by counselor recommendation and self-selection; criteria include academic achievement as well as maturity and ability to accept responsibility. Students play special roles in their own schools where they become sources of information about The Switching Yard. They also visit a number of community agencies and become familiar with a wide range of services. Their outreach has been most successful; even while school enrollments are sharply declining in Marin County, the number of volunteers more than doubled last year.

VI. Dissemination

Having established models as described above, NCRY then undertook activities designed to disseminate both the rational underlying mentorships for the gifted and talented, as well as information on promising practices as demonstrated by actual experiences of models. Four kinds of dissemination activities were accomplished; (a) training workshops were held for potential adaptors; a newsletter was developed and edited for publication on mentorship (We are in the process of distributing it.); (b) arrangements were made for potential adaptors to visit and observe the operation of model projects; (c) a manual was developed and distributed. These activities are described below.

Training Workshops

Training workshops were held in all three regions. Presentations were made by staff and students from model projects. Workshops were attended by school personnel who wished to learn how to improve existing programs or who were in positions to initiate new programs and wanted advice on how to do so. Through personal contact with Associates or with state and local administrators prior to the workshops, participants had been informed about program goals and were thus able to make a preliminary analysis of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the situations they faced locally.

The Northeast and Midwest workshops were attended by at least two persons from each school represented. NCRY has found that having more than one person from a school system facilitates local program implementation. The West workshop was devoted to devising strategies for developing a network of mutually supportive projects within the region.

Staffs of model projects decided to constitute themselves as a support group for each other and for potential adaptors within their region. Highlights of the workshops follow.

The Northeast workshop was held April 21, 1977, at the site of Project LEARN, the Nature Center in Westport, Connecticut. This workshop was attended by staff and students from models and potential adaptors. After introductory presentations by model projects' staff and students, participants spent the rest of the day meeting in small groups with model projects' personnel. In this manner, most participants explored in depth at least two models.

Dominant throughout the conference was a consciousness of the constraints within which public school people must function. Therefore, practical questions were constantly posed about issues such as scheduling, transportation, implications for college credits. But such questions were not the only preoccupation. Tougher questions, such as placement of students in roles requiring confidentiality, definition of "giftedness," justification of programs exclusively for the gifted, strategies for conducting formative evaluation, were dealt with.

Interest was highest in those model projects which seemed most easily replicable. Project LEARN, for example, appealed to several groups because of its low budget and minimal disruption of regular school scheduling.

The Law Institute at John Dewey High School in Brooklyn proved to be an especially useful model for other (law-related) programs, such as those at Staples High School in Westport and the Cortland County Legislative Intern Program; it demonstrated how students can be actively involved with mentors, rather than simply tracking or observing.

The Executive High School Internship Program was popular, perhaps because it demonstrated the advantages of an affiliation with a national program. In that program, formal procedures had already been established and a large number of schools were familiar with the program.

Response to evaluation forms distributed at the end of the workshop indicated that most all participants were enthusiastic about the kind of networking that evolved form NCRY's identification of projects with similar goals and concerns. Many commented that it was encouraging and, indeed, exciting to begin dialogue with persons operating projects which they now sought to emulate.

The Midwest workshop was held on May 25, 1977, in Watertown, Minnesota. This workshop included teachers and students from gifted and talented mentorship models and also participants of consumers' education programs with mentorship components. Participants had requested this "mix" because they believed useful ideas and practices might be learned from one another. Project staffs from all models had considerable experience with programs of Youth Participation.

Since both kinds of models embraced the concept of Youth Participation, NCRY anticipated this workshop would offer an opportunity for cross-fertilization of ideas among projects. For example, an exciting mentorship for gifted students might be participation in a consumer action or consumers' education project. One example of such is The Web of Life, a homestead and farm project in Watertown, Minnesota, where this workshop convened. Many students in this project have community mentors, older residents of Watertown who teach them frontier survival crafts. The homestead provided an ideal setting for this joint workshop, and the anticipated cross-fertilization occurred continuously.

Like the workshop in the Northeast, initial presentations by staff and students of model projects was followed by small group discussions where practical details as well as more theoretical concerns were shared. Feedback from participants indicates that the level of student involvement in the workshop was particularly noteworthy.

The workshop served as a prologue to several conferences planned for Fall 1977, including a statewide Conference on Education for the Gifted and Talented sponsored by the Minnesota State Department of Education. The two NCRY Associates, Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin, who supervised the model projects in the Midwest have assisted in planning the conference. All model mentorship projects have been invited to participate.

The West workshop was held March 10, 1977, in San Francisco. In this region, NCRY found the established models, as well as struggling new or potential programs, had at least two common needs: (1) to be in direct contact with each other in order to build an association of mutual consultation and support and (2) to learn how to develop materials such as brochures, posters and publications to inform others--the public, administrators, school boards--of the nature of their work and to encourage other programs to join their mutually supportive network.

The workshop, in fact, did result in the dissemination of information about programs and practices in the San Francisco Bay Area by the network; Associates provided additional follow up by helping arrange site visits to models for a number of teachers and administrators.

Special Issue, Resources for Youth

A manual outlining the benefits of community-based mentorships for the gifted and talented which described some model projects is being distributed to (a) all state specialists of the education of the gifted and talented, (b) other relevant state personnel, (c) persons on mailing lists of state and federal offices of the Gifted and Talented, (d) persons requesting it from NCRY who learned about it through the NCRY newsletter, Resources for Youth, or through other sources.

Originally this brochure was to serve as advance publicity for the training workshops. However, the Associates proved to be quite effective in providing this publicity; thus a decision was made to postpone brochure production until models had been tested by Associates and by workshop participants' reactions to model presentations.

However, since Resources for Youth reaches 30,000 persons who have requested it and could additionally include the above mailing lists, a special issue of the newsletter is being prepared as the brochure. In this manner, persons who would not be exposed to the ideas of community-based mentorships will learn about the model projects and the possiblities of replicating these projects in their own communities.

Visitation

Associates arranged for interested teachers and administrators to visit model projects. Over the past ten years, NCRY has found such visitations to be an extremely effective means of program dissemination. School persons learn eagerly and confidently from the experience of peers who have common attitudes about the importance of learning opportunities for youth.

Statistics indicate that such project visitations resulted in new projects affecting approximately 2600 youth.

Over the last ten years, NCRY has produced an extensive array of "how to" booklets, manuals, films and videotapes. Such materials have been developed directly from documentation of successful practices of ongoing Youth Participation projects and have been field tested extensively prior to dissemination. The same process of materials development was initiated in the first year of this project.

Once this program was underway, thoughtful analysis indicated that it would be economical to combine the originally anticipated three publications intended for three audiences into one publication which could serve all three. The final published product resulting from the first year of operation is an inservice curriculum guide. Here are presented the rationale for establishing community-based mentorship programs for the gifted and talented, strategies for identifying the gifted, ways to initiate mentorship projects, practical concerns in the administration and evaluation of projects. Also described are program components of model projects under this contract and suggestions for adaptation to other contexts.

VII. Evaluation

Acting on the advice of the project's National Advisory Committee chaired by Dr. Ralph Tyler, NCRY focused its evaluation efforts during the first year of the program on the collection of observational and anecdotal materials (see Appendix C) and to postpone the development of a quantitative research design until the second year of the program. The Committee saw this qualitative data collected the first year as forming the basis of the research design to be developed. The data collected the first year, of which are excerpted below suggest tentatively that youth serving with mentors do benefit from their experience along the dimensions anticipated.

Additional evaluative material has been collected within each project. Different evaluative procedures were employed by projects as follows.

Northeast Region

Executive High School Internships, Boston, Massachusetts and Stamford, Connecticut

Part of a national program, these projects used national guidelines for pre- and post-testing. In addition, the Stamford program developed an instrument for an evaluation of students by mentors. Data collected demonstrates that students gained "specific knowledge about different organizations," "refined their skills in writing, speaking and human relations," and that they "took advantage of the opportunity to explore career possibilities."

Project LEARN, Westport, Connecticut

This project staff conducted their own evaluation on an informal basis. They obtained feedback from students, parents, counselors. Most gifted students in LEARN reported the mentorship "a positive addition to their education," especially those who tackled projects on an extremely high academic level. Program enrollment for 1977-1978 is almost double that for 1976-1977.

Creative Arts Community, Hartford, Connecticut

Creative Arts is a Title IV project and is thus evaluated by an external agency. Project staff also conducted an informal appraisal based on feedback from students, master artists, community liaison personnel and school personnel. In terms of perceived needs, students reported progress in their artistic development, understanding of their career goals and in some cases an "enhanced" career development.

The Law Institute, John Dewey High School, Brooklyn

Their program evaluation was based on (1) pre- and post-assessment by students of personal objectives and progress in the program, as well as the assessment of mentors to their progress and (2) feedback from mentors. Program success seems indicated by the facts that (a) an additional 120 more students are enrolled in the 1977-78 program and (b) that mentors (judges and lawyers) have recommended the program to colleagues who, in turn, have volunteered to become mentors and program sponsors.

Midwest Region

Each model in this region conducted its own internal evaluation; additionally, the Center for Social Research at the University of Minnesota conducted an evaluation of all community involvement projects in the Minneapolis school system. Excerpts from findings include the following:

Heritage of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art

"Competence in subject matter was the most significant achievement."

Visions of the City, Minneapolis Institute of Art

"The students gained extensive knowledge about urban problems, the kinds of action programs that might solve these, and understanding about people from a variety of different cultures."

Food Science Program, Marshall High School, Minneapolis

Students were highly satisfied with the program. They gained significant insight into self, capabilities and career opportunities.

The Community Involvement Project, Southwest High School, Minneapolis

The program was rated highly for career exploration and improving academic skills. Students also became more aware of their own capabilities and what they could contribute to others. "Some students, in such self-exploration, even found that they did not work well with other people and should not, initially at least, choose people-oriented careers."

West Region

Program for the Academically Talented (PAT), Emeryville School System, Emeryville, California

Emeryville School System conducted a formal evaluation of PAT with pre- and post-tests of the student's academic and personal growth. Mentors kept anecdotal records of student performance and of program experience.

Del Mar School Community Mentor Project, Tiburon, California

Internal evaluation includes a systematic feedback from the project coordinator, mentors and parents.

ACE, Project Enterprise, San Fransciso, California

Internal evaluation included feedback from mentors, student records and final term papers, as well as assessment by seminar leaders and self-assessment and by former student interns.

The Switching Yard, San Anselmo, California

Evaluation was provided by a systematic assessment of seminars and group interaction, and by student self assessment.

Probably more interesting than the above observational evaluations are some quotes from many reports. This anecdotal material is included in Appendix C.

APPENDIX A

Components of Youth Participation

WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

The best way to convey what is meant by Youth Participation is to describe Youth Participation projects. The National Commission on Resources for Youth, founded in 1967 and directed by Mary Conway Kohler, has done just this in several publications. [1,2] Several representative projects are described below.

- In Boston, an agency serving runaway youth was interested in starting a Youth Participation program. Their first attempt, placing youth on the governing board, had not been a success. The agency tried another plan, a youth-operated intake service. A service much needed which could not be supplied by agency staff. Youth participants had an opportunity to plan the intake service, recruit other youth, and devise other projects which could be operated through the agency. Despite some difficulties because of the nature of runaway youth (they are by nature transient and have difficulty keeping to schedules and appointments, even with the best of intentions), the program was a success.

- David, a 17-year-old blind student, was annoyed with the treatment he received as he traveled in buses and subways, and thought there should be more effort to educate children, not only about how to help in these obvious situations but about blind people in general. Along with two sighted friends, he set up a project to tour elementary schools in a large metropolitan suburb. In classrooms, they presented short skits to illustrate the correct way to act as a guide for a blind person, how the blind cope with home problems such as cooking, and how to be natural in conversations with the blind. They also demonstrated how braille is used. Students were asked to make posters illustrating what they had learned about the blind. David convinced the local association for the blind to continue his program, and he was hired to work with youth who would conduct similar programs.

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1. National Commission on Resources for Youth. New Roles for Youth in the School and Community. New York: Citation Press, 1974.

2. Youth Participation: Report of the National Commission on Resources for Youth to Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Human Development, Office of Youth Development, December 31, 1975.

*Founded in 1968 by a New York City artist, Cityarts Workshop, Inc. is a community arts group which involves young people from various parts of the city in making public works of art for their neighborhoods. Professional artists from Cityarts help young people decide on a theme for a mural, design it and transfer it to a large exterior wall; then the young people put up scaffolding and paint it. Cityarts youth have worked on over 15 projects including murals on Jewish Heritage, History of Chinese Immigration to the United States, and a Wall of Respect for Women. Frequently young people get community residents of all ages to help them complete their projects.

From the observation of these and many other programs, the National Commission on Resources for Youth has developed a definition which captures commonly shared elements of the better Youth Participation programs:

> Youth Participation is defined as the involving of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others, i.e. outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features of Youth Participation are provisions for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal.

Some Aspects of the Definition Illustrated

Responsible, challenging action. Many agencies set up programs to help younger children who are in trouble, either with the police or in school. Youth working in these programs typically have responsibility for establishing some relationship with the younger children and then, with limited supervision from adults, counsel and also carry out learning activities. Although they are often given training by adults, they have complete responsibility once a program is developed beyond the initial stages, rather than being told what to do each step of the way.

Meet genuine needs. It is not difficult to find genuine needs at the community level. Youth who are providing companionship and shopping services for the elderly are meeting genuine needs. Youth designing and painting murals on city buildings are meeting the need to brighten sometimes-depressing city environments. Youth working actively on Pollution Probe projects are meeting easily recognized needs. In In the Southern Appalachian town of Rabun Gap, Georgia, youth have documented the folk wisdom of the old mountain people in their area and reported it in their own magazine, which they have named Foxfire. The result has been the rescue of a priceless cultural heritage of crafts, folkways and reminiscences that might have died unrecorded with the last generation that carried it in their heads but for the efforts of these young people--another example of meeting a genuine need.

Opportunities for planning and/or decision making. In Denver, Colorado, youth devised a Computer Car Pooling Plan which enabled Denver residents to organize into car pools in order that resources might be conserved and over-crowding of downtown streets and parking facilities prevented. They provided computer print-outs which gave residents lists of other people who lived in the same area and had similar work hours and destinations.

At key points in all the participation programs we have described, youth--without adult supervision--have to decide what will be the next course of action of direction for the project. These decisions are often not dramatic ones which alter the nature of the project, but day-to-day decisions which have to be taken. For example, youth operating a recreational program for severely retarded children have to decide whether the children can be

left for just part of the day (which causes interruption and adjustment problems or should they be in the program for the whole day. Should parents stay around or simply leave their children? Does a non-participating child need to be more firmly dealt with or given individual attention?

Critical reflection and group effort toward a common goal. Youth who are involved in a peer counseling program where they counsel peers referred to them by guidance counselors and administrators take part in seminars where they have an opportunity to reflect on their own roles in helping others, to analyze their own motivations and reactions, and to practice advanced counseling techniques. They also share common problems and feelings and have an opportunity to jointly plan other services for youth, such as meetings for parents on the problems of children.

APPENDIX B

Statistics of Numbers of Students & Teachers
Directly Affected by NCRY's Mentorship Program
for the Gifted & Talented

Statistics of Numbers of Students & Teachers Directly Affected by NCRY's Mentorship Program for the Gifted & Talented

Northeast

Models	Number	% Caucasian	% Non-Caucasian
Creative Arts Community	120	50	50
Learn	100	96	4
Executive H.S. Internships			
Stanford	25	90	10
Boston	50	80	20
John Dewey H.S.	40	60	40
Total Directly Affected	335		
Immediate and Known "Spin Off"			
Staples H.S.	60	100	0
Mamaroneck H.S.	140	70	30
Cortland County	80	95	5
Total Directly Affected	280		

Midwest

Community Involvement Class	100	99	1
Tutors for the Talented	39	100	0
Becker Clay County System	120	100	0
Marshall University H.S.	6	50	50
Total Directly Affected	265		

West

Switching Yard	10	60	40
PAT Emeryville	30	18	82
ACE Enterprise	56	70	30
Del Mar School, Tiburon	50	88	12

Models:	Number	% Caucasian	% Non-Caucasian
Partial models with some good mentorship elements but not fully qualified. Some elements used for other sites, through NCRY mediation:			
East Bay Center for Performing Arts	1200	38	62
Ex. Int., Sacramento	30	64	36
Ex. Int., Monterrey	27	43	57
Urban School	140	86	14
Piner H.S., Santa Rosa	40	86	14
Jordan H.S., Palo Alto	60	80	20
Mediated Inter-Site Consult:			
San Francisco:			
Wilson H.S.	50	17	83
Ben Franklin H.S.	35	63	37
Everett J.H.S.	50	57	43
Peton	27	28	72
MacIntyre	50	60	40
Washington H.S.	30	60	40
Galilea	120	58	42
Berkeley			
West J.H.S.	25	26	74
Washington J.H.S.	10	13	87
Franklin J.H.S.	12	24	76
Richmond			
Richmond H.S.	28	56	44
Oakland			
Sequoia	28	56	44
Redwood H.S.	12	37	63
Bret Harte	15	21	79
Oakland H.S.	32	54	46
Crocker H.S.	14	54	46
Santa Rosa			
Several schools	150	80	20
Total Directly Affected	2,431		

APPENDIX C

Anecdotal Material
(Selected from NCRY Associates Reports)

ANECDOTAL MATERIAL

(Selected from NCRY Associates Reports)

Northeast Region

Creative Arts Community, Hartford, Connecticut

"The Hartford Symphony was scheduled for a lunch-hour concert, under the auspices of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, in the rotunda of the State Capitol, and Dan Parker, the conductor, had offered to meet with me there. Lonce Wyse, a high school junior, is apprenticed to Dan this year. Dan describes Lonce's apprenticeship as 'a socio-musical experience.' He feels an obligation to 'give him the feeling at this tender age of how it feels to become a conductor,' stating that the only way this can happen is on an individual level. Dan, it seems to me, is very clear about what he hopes Lonce will absorb; while he unquestionably does teach and direct Lonce, he also handles the relationship in such a way that Lonce learns from the real situations in which he finds himself, and from his constant presence as participant and as observer. Dan lists the skills and awarenesses, as well as knowledge a conductor must command, ranging from interpersonal skills, since an orchestra is totally dependent upon interaction of many kinds, through solid technical knowledge, to such tasks as marking the score for bowing (a chore Lonce, whose instruments are bassoon and piano, frequently performs) and setting up music stands. (There are reasons for their placement, variations in distance for different instruments, etc.) As to musical interpretations--that feature which perhaps distinguishes one conductor, and one orchestra, from another--Dan says, 'I can teach the approach to interpretation, but the interpretation has to be his own.' (Is this particular sensitivity perhaps a hallmark we should look for in distinguising mentorship from other kinds of teaching roles?) Discussing the wide range of knowledge and skills, such traits as 'spirit' and 'fire,' and organizaitonal ability, as well as musical talent that a conductor must have and Lonce must learn about, Dan stressed that the student must also get a sense of how a conductor 'runs his life.' He speaks of the need for reliability, and says, 'You always have to be setting an example.' While Dan was speaking of the conductor's role with relation to the orchestra, it is clear that this attitude pervades his one-to-one relationship with Lonce, too. (Another criterion for the good mentor--consciousness of his or her importance as role model?)

"Lonce arrived from a morning of classes, and Dan went on to his tasks. I suggested Lonce might simply tell me how he felt about the program, or if he preferred, I'd ask questions. He needed no prodding. Articulate, as well as musically talented (and probably bearing out the oft-repeated statement that the gifted and talented tend to be outstanding in more than one area), his first statement was, 'Educationally it's unbelievable.

Since I've already decided what I want to do, this is a head-start... It's made me more aware of what I'm getting into.' In response to a question about the relationship of his mentorship to his school work, Lonce indicated that he spends the mornings in 'regular' school as the price he pays in order to do what he wants. His music world extends beyond the mentorship to a variety of other activities, but it is evident that this experience is a very significant one. He notes that his mentorship in conducting 'helps and is helped' by his participation as a player in another orchestra. 'I start noticing things the conductor does, things he's pointed out here.' Most of all, Lonce says (and here, perhaps, is the synthesis of what should happen in a mentorship), I wouldn't get the same out of it if it wasn't individual... He can work with me as a person, not just as a student."

* * * * * *

"I visited Robert Guzman-Forbes in the basement of St. Peter's School, where he has been meeting with three girls--Sandra from Buckley High School in Hartford, Beth from Glastonbury, and Janice from Windsor. For the first time today, two more girls arrived, both minority, innercity, and not a part of what was happening. (apparently they had very specific goals and expectations which CAC has not been able to meet; they wanted to work in fashion drawing and design, and CAC has not been able to identify a teacher/advisor in this area.) A few of the kids' observations, to give the flavor, should suffice as a supplement to this program."

Sandra: "Coming to Mr. Forbes gives me time to do my work... Last year with Mr. Greene, I learned how it is to start as an artist... I'm seeing how an artist lives... Last year, a starving artist, and this year, a successful artist... It's frustrating in school. The teacher (in art class) is controlling instead of teaching... Mr. Forbes is here to help when I need it, and I'm beginning to know what I need... I never would have been able to see all these places and meet these people--at the university, people who work in art galleries, and all, and to learn what it's like to survive as an artist."

Beth: "The art classes at school are filled with kids just there to get a credit... You need to compete for the teacher's attention. Here you don't need to compete; Mr. Forbes is ready to help... Here you're with creative people and they inspire... First, he explores our raw talent, then he gives guidance... So it's <u>our</u> discovery

through help from him... It helps a lot. He's a teacher, but he's really an overseer and a guider... Here to see we don't do anything really basically wrong... I never thought of myself as an artist til Mr. Forbes said, 'You are an artist. When someone asks what you are, you tell them, 'I'm an artist.' "

Janice: "I'm a completely different person than I was before... I was getting mad at school. Now I'm doing what I want to do, and getting helped at it...."

Executive High School Internships, Stamford, Connecticut

"Karen, who worked at a marine lab in Milford, tended to agree with Dave, even though the lab had previous experience with interns. Those, however, had been college students, and Karen thought her mentor may have expected Karen to have as much background for her role as those older students. 'At first,' she said, 'I just faked it.' We talked a little about how an 'intern' can indicate his/her needs to the mentor. The students seemed all to be concerned about becoming 'pests' in a situation where the professionals seemed to be extremely busy. However, Karen commented that after three weeks of cleaning oysters, she finally talked to her sponsor, who immediately gave her other tasks, with appropriate guidance. Karen said, 'I should have done it earlier.' Several students agreed that some of these problems could be forestalled if students and mentors could meet at the start of the program. All felt, however, that provision must be made for renegotiation if the placement fails to meet expectations. (Clearly, the same opportunity must exist for the mentor.) Bob, Jack and I agree that NCRY's resources and information will be helpful in clarifying these procedures. I suggested that the seminar has an important role to play in the shared examination of expectations/actualities, and in the support and assistance young people can offer each other for handling problems. It appears that in this pilot program period problems of scheduling precluded the use of the siminar; students, teacher and administrator all view this as a failing, and one that should be rectified."

Midwest Region

Community Involvement Program, Minneapolis, Minnesota

"Another gifted project, the Community Involvement Course at Southwest High School, was also briefly explained. Joan McNaughton, the coordinator, described how it is an opportunity for students with an idea of interest and strong motivation to design an educational opportunity beyond what the school can provide. Often gifted students cannot find challenging learning experiences in the school, and they yearn for a way to grow, stretch, explore. Through this course, the student works with the coordinator to develop a proposal and a plan for fulfilling this yearning. A student at the conference, Sharon Bush, described her own metaporphosis, and how through this option, she gained enough self-confidence and experience to become a self-directed learner.

"Here are some excerpts from Sharon's final written report."

"Sharon is gifted, but she does not test very high in standarized texts. For example, she had low 400s' on the SAT and was concerned that she might not get accepted to the college she wanted to attend. The paper catalogs her development, starting with a trip to Washington, D.C. (really an observation and study trip for one week) as the beginning of her self-initiated, out-of-classroom learning, through her involvement as a teacher's assistant in a school for retarded kids, through her work in the Sexual Assault Division of the County Attorney's office as an intern (she learned how to give presentations on this subject to student and adult groups around the city), to her own research project and her assistance on the Minnesota Youth Poll as our only high school student researcher. The paper is a powerful piece of evidence to build a case for Youth Participation for the gifted. By the way, it was the involvement in the community that helped her get accepted to Six Ivy League colleges that she applied to. Those students with high scores on entrance tests and straight A averages did not impress admissions officers as much as a record like Sharon's which demonstrates initiative and independent learning ability. I think this is a very important point to stress with those who think non-classroom experiences are not appropriate for the talented/gifted student.

"Here are some excerpts from Sharon's final written report."

"My three months of teaching at Emerson was a most challenging educational experience because I faced many situations that required a devotion, knowledge, and patience different from an academic environment. I gained a strong sense of maturity and self-assurance by using the knowledge I had gleened from school and from independent study. The more work I donated to the class, the more effective and satiated I was as a teacher. I honestly feel I've become a better student by teaching--they are symbiotic. Not only did I learn more about myself, but I became aware of the problems, needs, and values of the mentally handicapped. Their opportunities for advancement are limited by our society. Through my experiences, I discovered that this limitation stems deeper than financial needs. As I became totally involved with my students, I perceived that their honesty, understanding and faith were valued before possession and status--unlike the society I would return to for the remainder of the day. I have often heard of the search for eternal youth. Maybe these children have found the secret to this happiness.

"If I live through moments and not days, and moments are experiences, I have lived well. If I learn from experiences, I have learned an immensity. For I have shared moments of warmth, growth and love with these very special children. They never let the mystery out of a balloon or tire of playing in a tree. They never take a smile or an open hand for granted. They know that understanding and love with others is the only true feeling they can hold and the only thing that can't be taken from them. This is the beauty of these people. Not that a hand is black or white, small or large, dirty or clean--it is a hand and it's in mine.

"Four years ago, I would have never imagined myself working as a volunteer teacher in a school for the mentally handicapped, a sexual assault counselor, an intern for the County Attorney's Office, nor did I dream I could utilize the psychological theories I studied through my own research project. I feel Action Learning has helped me in gaining more responsibility, social awareness, self-esteem and maturity, as well as a knowledge unobtainable in a school building.

"I can't express my thanks enough to Dinae Hedin and the other Action Learning coordinators who helped me to reach my aspirations. I know now that I can do things that I would never have the drive for earlier. Next year I begin my trek through college and many of the projects open to college seniors or graduate students I already have participated in through Action Learning. I feel I am going to demand more from my college curriculum as well as myself."

West Region

The Switching Yard, San Anselmo, California

"Many special projects develop out of our work with young people, teachers, and agency personnel. These projects, in which the gifted and talented student actually participate in the creation and direction of the program, demonstrate the integration of learning with acting and serving.

"The Tamalpais Activity Groups (TAG) program is staffed by high school youngsters who organize group activities for young children who have problems in school relating to their teachers and the other children. One group leader wrote, 'I wish I could tell you how much I have learned and benefitted from the experience of getting into TAB. I know that it has helped me to grow in many ways... I never thought that kids could learn so much from the small things I offer, but they loved us back and I couldn't believe how great that made me feel. TAG has given me a sense of responsibility and something extra to add to my life!'

"At Tamalpais High School, we developed another new position, that of Student Coordinator, a position created and ably filled by Chris Klementovich. Two years ago, Chris joined us as a shy and insecure group leader, even missing one meeting with her children in order to be with friends. The next week, she was both stunned and thrilled to find that her girls had missed her when she wasn't there. This was a turning point for her, and she hasn't missed a single meeting since! She has blossomed into a confident and compassionate young women who last spring led a difficult boys' group. She was ready for even more responsibility this fall, and so we created the position of Student Coordinator, through which she could share her expertise and sensitivity with inexperienced group leaders. We are very fortunate that Chris will continue to work with us in the spring, assisting in seminar meetings, observing groups, and helping with clerical work and phoning.

"A number of students who fit the gifted and talented descriptions have made beautiful contributions to TAG and credit their experience with the children and their peers in the seminars for making important changes in their career goals or in their attitudes about themselves. Tim and Cathy [co-directors] have quite scrupulously avoided looking at academic ratings, test scores and the like. Some talents have made themselves obvious almost at once. For instance, one pair of group leaders, a boy and girl, used their very considerable dramatic gifts directly with the children in focusing on puppetry, pantomime, making masks, costumes and all sorts of improvisational games. In other cases, students who were academically gifted or who had special talents were found out only at the end of the school year when Cathy and Tim began reading their names in the newspapers with the announcements of the scholarships and awards they had won. One boy, Randy, a math and computer wiz, had been getting all sorts of special program attention on account of his brains, but apparently that wasn't the only thing he craved. He not only volunteered for the program but talked a very shy, brainy girl in his class into being his co-leader, and Cathy reports that theirs was one of the most sensitively handled of all the groups. Later, finding out about Randy's math and science ability, Cathy had occasion to speak with his counselor who said that Randy used his experience in TAG as the basis of his essay on applying for a scholarship to Cal. He could certainly have won it because of his grades and recommendations, but it seems significant that it was his newly discovered talents that were most important to him. These stories all confirm what you have long been saying and there are others--Celeste who has won national writing awards, Chris and Tom."

Program for the Academically Talented, Emeryville, California

"David Kereski, a graduate in biology, is working with Mitch on a project which Mitch will submit to the Science Fair at the Academy of Science in May in San Francisco. Until now no kid from Emery has ever dreamed of entering this competition. Winning a first here for kids is like getting the Nobel Prize. But things are heavy. The abstract has to be in two weeks from now, and Mitch is getting cold feet. David works with him at the [Lawrence] Hall [of Science] on Fridays and goes to his elementary school on week days. The idea for the project has to be Mitch's and all the solutions have to be his own work. David, however, can act as his mentor and help steer him through the stages. We are all a little apprehensive. No one wants to put too much pressure on Mitch, but we're so hoping he will take the step. We try to appear unconcerned. It's his thing."

Del Mar School Community Mentor Project, Tiburon California

"Creative Writing--Joan Handley (9th grader) wants to be a writer. Sandal Warburg, a novelist, was happy to be her mentor. They formed a real colleague's friendship, sharing their stories and accounts of their own creative processes--what gets in the way of getting down to work; what acts of fate and serendipity serve the process in unexpected ways. Ms. Warburg loved it as much as Joan did. Because she was writing a novel about young girls (or perhaps because Joan inspired her to take this direction), she could ask Joan about her feelings about things, how she and her friends felt and what she thought about certain issues. It was not only the general pleasure and satisfaction of helping a younger writer but that she was getting very specific help and advice directly useful to her own work."